

A Secret Agent?

Did Oswald buildup oddball image to fool FBI?

By JOHN KEPLINGER
(Last of four articles)

Once back on American soil in mid-1962, Lee Harvey Oswald began drifting about from place to place and job to job, trailing an image of a rabble-rouser and unreformed Marxist.

After a fling at passing out "Fair Play for Cuba" literature on New Orleans street corners, he finally settled down in Dallas.

He landed a job with the Texas School Book Depository, and rented a room in town, commuting to the suburbs on weekends to visit his wife and child.

Oswald was home after 2½ years in Russia. How he managed his international travels so easily, returning home with a Russian bride, has opened the gates to a flood of speculation by Edward Ellis Smith.

Smith, 42, of 1849 Webster St., Palo Alto, is a former U.S. security-intelligence officer with service in the Army, State Department and Central Intelligence Agency.

In his career, he has spent several years in Moscow, speaks Russian fluently and was the first full-time State Department security officer of the American Embassy in Moscow.

TRAINED AGENT

Smith has concluded from the known facts of Oswald's life from 1959 to 1963 that the accused assassin of President John F. Kennedy was a trained Soviet agent.

He does not believe, however, that the dastardly act was committed on orders of the Kremlin.

Views of a security expert

Edward Ellis Smith, former Army, State Department and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) security-intelligence officer, believes accused assassin Lee Harvey Oswald was a trained Soviet agent, although not acting on orders

when he shot President John F. Kennedy.

In the last of a series of exclusive articles in today's Times, Smith speculates on Oswald's espionage assignment after returning to the United States from Russia.

Smith, who is not lacking in knowledge of undercover work, believes Oswald's assignment was routine and that it proved extremely frustrating to him. Oswald was in a hurry. He demanded action.

Smith has little doubt, either, that Oswald was mentally unbalanced, probably a schizoid personality — a type not unusual in undercover work.

Oswald went to Dallas, near the center of many space and defense installations, perhaps to "service a dead drop," Smith believes. A "dead drop" is a place — sometimes a rock, a

book on a crowded public library shelf or a post office box registered under an alias.

Other agents, perhaps working in the defense and space installations, forwarded information to the "dead drop" serviced by Oswald. He in turn passed it on elsewhere, Smith speculates.

FALSE NAME

He observes, Oswald maintained a post office box in Dallas under the alias "A. Hidell." It was to "A. Hidell" and that very same post office box that

a mail-order rifle was sent from Chicago.

In order to operate without detection, Oswald had to have a "cover." According to Smith that "cover" or "legend building," as the Russians call it, began to take shape before he left the Soviet Union.

It began to take shape when Oswald wrote letters to his mother, to a conservative Texas senator and to the secretary of the Navy, expressing dissatisfaction with life in the Soviet Union and a desire to return to the place of his birth.

But once he arrived, Oswald immediately began giving the impression he was "nutty as a fruitcake . . . a rabble-rouser . . . a drifter . . . a nut." This was part of his "cover," Smith believes.

Oswald must have come under FBI scrutiny on his return in mid-1962, Smith assumes. It is possible Oswald was subject to federal prosecution for using a pretext to get out of the Marines in 1959, for passing military information to the Russians and for claiming he had never sworn allegiance to another country when he renewed his American passport in 1962.

NO PROSECUTION

All these things he did, according to Smith, but the Justice Department, headed by Atty. Gen. Robert F. Kennedy, did not prosecute.

Smith further assumes the FBI was satisfied Oswald was some kind of "nut," who did not warrant a 24-hour report, much like a prison parolee, to an FBI agent every six months for an interview. He carried the name of a Dallas FBI agent in his notebook, Smith recalls.

Time wore on and Oswald became more and more impatient with his passive role. He grew resentful. He probably hadn't heard from his superiors a long time. He began to feel ignored. He had to do something about it.

Smith says it is not unusual for undercover agents to grow impatient.

"When Oswald's impatience got the best of him, he dashed off to Mexico City. Soviet agents are taught never to contact Russian embassies or consulates in the country in which they are